

## **Status of NH National Guard deployed units as of Dec. 1, 2004**

Total number of NH National Guardsmen: 2,700

### **NH Army National Guard: 1,700**

828 in Iraq, 67 in Afghanistan, 110 deploying early Dec for Iraq mission.

### **NH Air National Guard: 1,000**

12 in Iraq, 2 in Qatar, 1 in Germany, 8 at locations in U.S.

Number of NH Guardsmen deployed overseas: 910

**1. C Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment (Mountain), based in Manchester.** 180 soldiers in Iraq conducting security and patrol operations.

**2. 744<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company, based in Hillsboro, with armories in Claremont and Somersworth.** 150 soldiers in Iraq conducting transportation missions.

**3. Headquarters, 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, based in Manchester.** 110 soldiers in Iraq. The unit is a command and control element for three battalions, which are conducting security missions.

**4. 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, based in Berlin with armories in Lancaster, Littleton, Plymouth, Woodsville, Lebanon and Franklin.** 180 soldiers in Iraq conducting security missions.

**5. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 172<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery, based in Manchester with armories in Rochester, Portsmouth, Milford and Nashua.** 180 soldiers in Iraq conducting security missions.

**6. 210<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment, based in Peterborough.** 50 soldiers in Afghanistan providing engineering and construction support for Operation Enduring Freedom.

**7. 260<sup>th</sup> Air Traffic Control Squadron & Clinic, NH Air National Guard based at Pease in Newington.** 12 air traffic controllers in Iraq. Two medical personnel in Qatar.

**8. Combat Service Support Team, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade.** 17 soldiers representing different units and specialties in Afghanistan to provide mentorship to Afghan National Army in a variety of fields.

**9. 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 172<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery, Rear Area Operations Center .** 28 soldiers representing different units for command and control mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

**10. 1159<sup>th</sup> Medical Company (Air Ambulance).** 110 soldiers preparing for air medical mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit departs N.H. first week of December for Ft. Dix, NJ.

\* **Note: 3643<sup>rd</sup> Maintenance Company, based in Concord** has provided more than half its guardsmen to augment deploying units.

## UPDATES FROM UNIT COMMANDERS IN THEATER

*Editor's Note: The following updates were emailed by the unit commanders. They were slightly edited for grammar and operational security. This is the seventh installment. A list of medal recipients and individual accomplishments follows the updates.*

### **744<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company**

***Capt. Mary Bergner of Hampton** is commander of the 744<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company. The unit arrived in Iraq in early March. Its mission has been to transport dry goods, water, food, petroleum products and general supplies to ground units. Editor's Note: 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Ana Cutting of Penacook has been acting commander for the past month. Capt. Bergner returned to the U.S. for medical reasons unrelated to her military duty. The following update is from 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Cutting.*

What a whirlwind month it has been for the 744<sup>th</sup>! We have been running steadily, logging over 28,070 miles so far this month, and bringing our year to date total to over 546,885 miles, and over 23,696 short tons hauled.

The holy season of Ramadan is over, and we have seen a slight decrease in enemy contact, though our soldiers continue to stay vigilant and on a constant state of alert.

This past month, our company commander, **Capt. Mary Bergner**, returned to the states for medical reasons. I have assumed the huge responsibility of Acting Commander for the 744<sup>th</sup> until her return. The support of all the soldiers and leadership within the company and the battalion we fall under has been fantastic. We all feel her absence deeply, but with the fortitude the 744<sup>th</sup> is well known for; we drive on with our mission with the same courage and resilience as before. We look forward to **Capt. Bergner's** full recuperation and return.

The company has been running steadily, remaining focused on each mission. The 744<sup>th</sup> is consistently recognized for the professional way we handle each mission, and each individual soldier understands the importance of giving 100% every day. We understand that as time gets shorter, it gets more and more difficult to hold that focus, but now, more than ever, as we get closer to returning home, do we also understand the importance of remaining vigilant and strong. We have been lucky of late with limited enemy contact, and we certainly hope that continues!

In the last month, the Multi-National Force Commander, Brigadier General Metz was at LSA Anaconda to address several topics in a town hall style presentation. There, two of our soldiers were presented awards for incidents that took place here in theater. **Sgt. Gregory Sears of Keene** received a Purple Heart for shrapnel wounds sustained in the rocket attack that occurred in our company area in August. **Spc. Joshua Nadeau of Vernon, VT** received an Army Commendation Medal with the Valor device for his actions on contact during the IED attack he encountered with **Sgt. Douglas Stone of Antrim** in March. We are very proud of them, and it was an honor to receive the awards on the day the MNF Commander happened to be here.

Our new company area has been coming right along. We finished construction on our gym and the soldiers have been taking full advantage of that on their downtime. The trailers have been great now that it is getting down to 30 and 40 degree temperatures. We actually have started using heaters! We never thought we'd see that day! We have already pulled out most of the cold weather gear we used at Fort Drum. We don't really mind, though, because it just means we are getting closer to coming home!

The 744<sup>th</sup> continues to play an integral part in supporting the entire theater of operations, and it's no task we take lightly. These soldiers are dedicated, accomplished individuals and they make up a team fully committed to getting the job done. As Iraqi elections approach and operations are conducted all over the country, we understand that this is a large part of the overall success of bringing a free democratic society to Iraq. The holidays will be tough this year, as we are separated from family and friends, but know that we are with you all in heart, mind and spirit, as we continue to count down those days. Have a wonderful holiday season!

**C Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Regiment)**  
**"Mountain Company"**

***Capt. Raymond Valas of Goffstown** is commander of C Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Infantry (Mountain). The mission set Mountain Company is Movement to Contact, Ambush, Checkpoints, Civil Affairs Personal Security Detail, radio relay stations, Iraqi Highway Patrol development, and outer cordon for Fallujah operations. The unit arrived in Iraq in late March.*

The Infantrymen of Charlie Company 3-172nd Infantry continue to do exceptionally well. We recently added another mission to our set, conducting the outer cordon for the operations in Fallujah. While the living conditions for this temporary assignment are not as comfortable, we are happy to do our part in a large scale mission that will ultimately help pave the way to peaceful democratic elections in the coming year.

We are working more closely with the Iraqi Highway Patrol to establish it as a fully functioning entity in the community. This is by far one of the most rewarding assignments we have, since the results are evident when we see the Iraqi Patrolmen responding to and independently handling accident scenes and other issues that our company would previously have had to deal with. **Staff Sgts. Robert Hill of Glen** and **Chuck Campbell of Laconia** have spearheaded this effort. Their Battalion Commander and his Iraqi counterpart have applauded their efforts, having trained the Iraqi Patrolmen in EMT skills, security, weapons, and reporting procedures.

C Company has seen an increase in fighting in the wake of the Fallujah mission, as insurgents make desperate attempts to derail the progress the Iraqi people are making. During a recent engagement, **Hill's** squad encountered a group of five enemy insurgents. In the ensuing fight, **Sgt. Nathan Smith** was injured by two gunshots to his lower leg. The squad succeeded in killing two, wounding one, and capturing the other two insurgents. **Smith** is being treated at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, in good spirits after being reassured that his squad had captured or killed the entire enemy they encountered.

Many of the insurgents who fled Fallujah during the offensive ended up in our sector, trying to escape the multinational force that was routing them out. After receiving information from local residents that many foreign fighters had just arrived near their village, a successful attack led by **Staff Sgt. Sage Ladieu of Alton**, **Staff Sgt. Shannon Kulakowski of Exeter**, and **Staff Sgt. David Svenson of Nashua** eliminated over 20 insurgents. As they maneuvered their squads through intense rocket propelled grenade and machine gun fire, they continuously engaged the enemy with .50 caliber machine guns and AT4 rockets. Once the three squad leaders had fixed them in position, **Ladieu** coordinated attack helicopters to assist them from the air, ultimately ending the battle less than 45 minutes after it began. This action ultimately sealed off our

company's area and denied it as a route of escape for insurgents in Fallujah, to the delight of the local Iraqi people in our sector.

## **210<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment**

*Capt. Craig Lapiana of Merrimack is commander of the 210<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment. His unit has been in Afghanistan since early March. The unit is supporting engineer and construction projects.*

It is a cold morning in Afghanistan and we are preparing to go on a Commander's Emergency Relief Program or CERP mission. CERP missions are very important and rewarding for the people of this nation and the unit members of the 210<sup>th</sup>. We plan and execute a mission once a week outside of the responsibilities of supporting the base which we live on.

CERP was established to put resources quickly into projects that directly benefit the local community. Members of the 210<sup>th</sup> sign up on a volunteer basis directly because they care about helping increase the standard of living for the children. For the soldier it is worth taking the additional risk "outside the wire" so they can see firsthand the impact we are making here overseas. It is very rewarding and gives a higher purpose to us being here.

The story below is written by **Spc. Marie McCourty of Manchester**, a soldier in our detachment. She is expressing from the perspective of being a female soldier fulfilling her required duties. I see the importance of the role she describes below in the same light as the Infantry warrior fighting in the mountains. With that said I provide all the resources at my disposal to accomplish this important task at hand. And I should also mention that she is not alone in that we have other female soldiers who view their role in the same light. The following is her story:

**"My name is Spc. Marie McCourty and we just got back from a CERP mission at a destroyed school named Toghberdi that is located in the village of Sandar Klail.**

**When we got there we were led into the school and introduced to the teachers, headmaster and principal. The children were grouped together by sex and age. All the younger boys were in one corner of the courtyard, the older ones in another. The small girls were crowded into a third and the older girls were inside and out of view. Capt. Craig Lapiana, my commander, made an announcement that Wahid (our interpreter) translated for the crowd, explaining why we had come and what we hoped to do for them. The children stared at us as though we were from another world. And they're right. Because the world we live in is nothing like the world that they live in. The girls pay particular attention to me as I mingle among the male teachers and my fellow soldiers. They are dressed in the traditional garb and while they are not yet of the age when they don the burkas, they do wear head scarves that they use to cover their mouths with when I smile and wave to them. They giggle and turn to each other and whisper. I can only wonder what they are saying and thinking: I am standing in the midst of the all male group; not off to the side. I am initiating conversation; not waiting until I am spoken to. I have on the exact same uniform and am carrying an identical weapon as my male counterparts. I am not cowering or reserved or shy. I am standing with the male soldiers as an equal. What do they think of that, I wonder?**

**We had brought with us little gift bags for each of the children. Inside each bag was a Beanie Baby, some paper, pens, pencils and glue or paste. People back home are having school supplies and Beanie Baby drives at their schools or churches and sending us boxes and boxes of the stuff for the children. The primary mission for today was to access the reconstruction of the school with a secondary mission to hand out 257 beanie babies to the children. You can read more about this at [www.OperationBeanieBaby.com](http://www.OperationBeanieBaby.com).**

**When it came time to pass out the bags of school supplies I picked up one of the garbage bags and started off in the direction of the young girls. One of the teachers came over and took the bag**

from me. He carried it over to the girls and then held it open for me as I passed out the smaller bags, one for each child. It was a small act of consideration and courtesy but I didn't even recognize the magnitude of that act until now.

The women of Afghanistan are work horses. They haul huge amounts of water and firewood. You will see a woman carrying a load of twigs wrapped up in a makeshift tarp on the top of her head. Often times the package would measure three feet across. And a male will walk beside her carrying nothing. Females are second class citizens over here. There is no chivalry that I can see. Yet this man carried that heavy bag for me. What kind of impact did that have on these young girls?

After each of the young girls had a bag it was time to go into the class room where the older girls were waiting.

Wahid, our interpreter was with me and introduced me to the room. Again I started passing out the bags. I know very little Dari but this was the perfect time to use it. As I handed each girl her bag I said Hello (Salaam) and Good Morning (Soh-ba hide). They seemed very pleased. Some of the girls took their bag and said "Thank you" in English which I returned with a "Kobel ish-nay" which is Dari for "You're Welcome."

They smiled and stared as though I was a movie star. I asked one girl "Chan so last tee?" (How old are you?) You should have seen the look on her face. So surprised and so excited. She told me "Charl-duh" (14). When I held up my outstretched hands and then an additional four fingers with a questioning look on my face they all laughed and the girl nodded that I had gotten it right. Their excitement encouraged me so I asked several more girls. Some were thirteen, one was fifteen, but most were fourteen. This was the junior high.

I went into the second classroom and all the girls stood up out of their chairs in unison. Wahid turned to me and said "This is the greatest honor." I was thrilled.

I passed out the bags and spoke to each girl individually and looked into every single pair of dark brown eyes. Then it was time for the three teachers. Wahid gave me the advice to give each teacher two bags because they are "more honorable." So I did.

The first one returned my smile with her own-minus her two front teeth. How they had been knocked out I can only imagine; it would have been inappropriate to ask. I had to make the first move to shake their hands but when I did they touched their hand to their chest before shaking my hand which is another sign of honor.

Wahid helped me talk with the teachers and they implored me to please help them; they need a school very badly. They told me that it is excruciatingly hot in the summer time and bitter cold in the winter. The roof they currently have is made of sticks and branches and the sky is visible in every classroom. I told them that it was not my decision to make but if it was, I would give them the best school they had ever seen. The teachers thanked me for all we are doing. They touched their chest and shook my hand vigorously.

These women have seen a great deal of violence in their lifetime and have very little. They are tough, strong, and resilient. But this is the first time I have seen that determined look in their eyes. It's the first time I have ever seen a grown woman's face at all. They cover themselves so diligently with the burkas.

Wahid and I were led out of the classroom and back into the courtyard by the headmaster and then we watched as the children were ushered out of the school. The female teachers came last and they were back in their burkas. I said, "Goodbye" ("Who daf-es") and smiled at each of them as they passed by. I'm sure they smiled back but I could not see their mouths and the tiny mesh screen that they view the world through hid their eyes. The only way I could differentiate them was by the color of their shoes.

When the females and children had left, it was time for Capt. Lapiana and the headmaster of the school to talk business about the new school proposal. Spc. Christopher Lucas of Dublin and I pulled security in the doorway of the courtyard. Some of the male teachers were lingering around and we were having what little conversation we could without an interpreter. Slowly but surely the children

gravitated back towards us. They had their bags and pulled out the Beanie Babies to show us with delighted smiles on their faces.

Then came the questions. One boy took his glue stick, opened it and then put it to his lips as though it were Chap Stick. Lucas and I stopped him and tried to mime our way through gluing some paper together with mock frustration when we couldn't pull our hands apart.

When they didn't understand, we borrowed a piece of paper from another boy and showed him exactly what we meant. Spc. Lucas imitated putting the glue stick to his lips as though it were Chap Stick and then licked his lips and pretended that it tasted awful. Laughter rippled through the crowd. Another boy pulled a small jar of yellow paint out of his bag and held it out to us. His friend standing next to him took it from him with a smile on his face that said *he* knew what this was and how to use it.

He opened the jar, dipped his finger into the yellow paint, rolled up his pant leg to reveal a scrape on his shin and then attempted to wipe the "medicine" on his wound. Spc. Lucas and I stopped him. I took the paint from him and as he held the paper for me I painted a miniature sun for him. Understanding set in and he nodded and put the paint back in his bag as though it was golden treasure. The carpenters in our unit could tell you the same thing that we read on his face: In Afghanistan, paint is very hard to come by. All in all it was the best game of charades I've ever played.

Finally the moment I dread had come: it was time to leave. We walked back to the vehicles and the children followed closely behind. They dreaded our departure as well. We piled into the vehicles and watched as the children chased after us calling and waving happily. When the teachers beckoned to them they obediently stopped. As we rounded the bend in the road, the last view I had was of a girl who looked about eight years old. One hand clutched her bag of goodies and the other hand was raised high above her head giving us the thumbs up. On her face was the biggest smile I have ever seen."

So this CERP mission, like all the others which we have conducted, directly confronts the results of a brutal government that was left unchecked for too long. Its focus is simple and direct. You might ask how this enormous task can possibly be accomplished. I like to say, "One smile at a time".

### **Headquarters, 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade**

*Col. James Guise of Tucson, Arizona is commander for HQ, 197<sup>th</sup> FAB, which arrived in Iraq in early March. Its mission is to provide command and control of three subordinate field artillery battalion, each is from a different state. Command and control functions include mission assignments, providing and coordinating logistics support, maintaining morale, welfare and unit discipline. The three battalions assigned to HQ, 197<sup>th</sup> FAB are from the West Virginia, South Dakota and South Carolina Army National Guards.*

The 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade has been in theater for almost nine months now. The brigade headquarters and the majority of its three battalions are located in the southeastern part of Iraq near the city of An Nasariyah. There are over 1,300 soldiers under the control of Headquarters & Headquarters Battery, 197<sup>th</sup> FAB. The majority of the brigade is located at Tallil Air Base, but we have batteries and sections spread out over 26 remote locations.

Our primary mission has remained the same, the command and control of three artillery battalions. 1-201<sup>st</sup> FA from West Virginia has the primary mission of conducting convoy security for Southern Iraq. 2-147<sup>th</sup> FA from South Dakota is securing stock piles of captured enemy ammunition at various sites in southern Iraq and working with civilian contractors so that it can be destroyed. 3-178<sup>th</sup> FA from South Carolina continues to provide security for fixed communication sites. They also provide quick reaction forces to assist units traveling along the main supply route in our area, and relay medevac requests for them in times of emergency. To

date our battalions have driven over 1,500,000 miles escorting convoys, and have either moved or destroyed over 9,000 tons of captured enemy ammunition.

We have completed our move to Tallil Air Base. Our brigade Tactical Operations Center and Administrative & Logistics Operations Center are operating out of office trailers and the command group has offices in a hard stand building. We quickly realized during our first rain storm that the trailer roofs leak, so KBR is re-roofing them for us. Other than that, the facilities are a big improvement from the tents at Camp Cedar. Right next to the TOC area the new dining facility for Tallil Air Base was built, which is very convenient for us. For Thanksgiving we enjoyed quite a banquet there! You could tell the support staff put in quite an effort in decorating the dining facility and serving a traditional meal.

One of our civil affairs projects of late has been helping Lamia, a 14-year-old Iraqi girl, receive treatment for a life threatening medical condition. A few months ago our brigade surgeon and our civil affairs team visited the medical clinic for the nearby town of Al Batha to drop off excess supplies. There the Iraqi doctors showed them a girl who looks like she is only 8, but was actually a young teenager. Her abdomen was grossly enlarged and she looked 10 months pregnant due to a condition she had had for 10 years. They were draining 1.5 liters of fluid from her, which they did weekly, into a rusty bucket with flies buzzing around. She was malnourished and anemic and was lucky she had not died from an infection from the numerous drainage procedures.

Due to regulations limiting what medical treatment Coalition Forces can provide the Iraqi populace, getting assistance for young Lamia required networking, deal making, pulling a few strings, and “working outside the box.”

**Col. Mike McGandy of Manchester**, the brigade executive officer, sent digital photos of Lamia to the Harvard Medical Clinic, and they advised us what tests to have done. **Maj. Ray Kelly, our current brigade surgeon from the Alaska Army National Guard**, coordinated with the 31<sup>st</sup> Combat Support Hospital up in Baghdad to have a CT scan done on her. Now the problem of getting her there arose. First we had to win the trust of her family in letting American forces take their daughter to Baghdad. This required a few meetings and the development of their trust in our intentions.

**Spc. Laurie Quick of Londonderry** became a constant companion for Lamia during the entire process. Having a female soldier as part of our civil affairs team definitely paid off in this situation. **Quick** and Lamia developed a close relationship that helped the entire process move along. After the family agreed to let us take Lamia to Baghdad, we had to plan the convoy just like any other combat mission here. We transported her and her older brother in an ambulance which was escorted by gun trucks. Iraqi people are very protective of their females, and it was necessary that her brother chaperone her during all procedures and visits.

Our brigade personnel sergeant, **Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Roland Roberge of Concord**, has a son who works at Massachusetts General Hospital and he was able to put us in contact with experts at the Harvard Medical School. We were able to send the results of the CT scan back to the Massachusetts General Hospital via the Tallil Air Base FEDEX office. Massachusetts General offered to perform the surgery without charge. However, the 31<sup>st</sup> CSH also had the capability to perform the life-saving surgery. This precluded the need to acquire hard to get travel documents for Lamia and her brother.

Before we could transport Lamia back to Baghdad for the surgery, enemy activity intensified along the route that we needed to travel, so we had to postpone the surgery date a few times. If young Lamia was injured due to an insurgent attack while she was in our care, the local public

reaction would be very damaging to say the least. We were taking some big risks with this endeavor, but we had the chance to save someone's life, and that was worth it.

The surgery was a success; the army doctors removed a 28-pound benign tumor from young Lamia.

In America it was something that would have been removed at an early stage, but here it had been growing in her for 10 years. It had literally caused her to be so malnourished that she had not gone through puberty because her body had been providing the nourishment to the tumor.

After spending a week in Baghdad at the Combat Support Hospital, Lamia and her brother were flown back to Tallil in a medevac helicopter a few days ago. Upon arrival, she had a seizure, and we rushed her back to the Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad. Thankfully Lamia is OK now and recovering nicely and her prognosis is good.

The 197<sup>th</sup> FA Brigade is part of the big mission to rebuild Iraq and provide a better future for the people here. In the big scheme of things, this is a minor story, but for one young girl and her family, we like to think we did give them a brighter future.

We are actually starting to plan our redeployment (return home) now. We have started shipping non essential equipment back home, and some of our brigade staff will be attending a redeployment conference next week. We will continue our mission here in Iraq for the next few months, but we know that in the near future we will be reunited with our families and loved ones.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Forward**

***Capt. Matt Boucher of Barrington** is commander of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 197<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Forward. His unit consists of four platoons each of which is conducting a variety of security mission in Ba'qubah, Mosul and Tikrit. The unit is known as "White Mountain Thunder"*

The men of 2-197 MP continue to support Coalition Forces in the Task Force Olympia and Task Force Danger area of operations. Their work has been exemplary. The following are updates from our various locations:

\*1<sup>st</sup> Platoon update submitted by **1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Greg Fillion of Littleton**: 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon "Gunnery" continue to conduct combat patrol escorts, detainee backhaul operations and customs missions in support of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. We have currently logged nearly 170,000 convoy miles and transported nearly 2,000 detainees throughout Task Force Danger and III Corps Area of Operations. Our customs teams are inspecting personal gear and equipment that units are packing for redeployment. Each unit must pass a customs inspection on all containers prior to shipping. Recent promotions include David Pelkey of Berlin to Staff Sergeant. He will be moving to Charlie Battery as the F.D.C. Chief.

\*2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon update submitted by **Capt. David Pearson, Billerica, MA**: Multiple projects have kept members of the 2/197 MP CO stationed in Ba'Qubah busy from the summer into the approaching winter.

While New Hampshire soldiers keep a vigilant watch from the rooftop of the Diyala Province Police Headquarters building they have also managed to train up a new generation of Iraqi Police at the facility's police academy. Iraqi police learn the basics of law enforcement from 2/197 instructors who teach everything from shooting skills to using handcuffs. To date 1,131 Iraqi police officers have graduated from the academy.



In addition to training Iraqi police. Our soldiers have assisted the First Infantry Division in recent mission throughout the city by providing escorts for the field ambulance and in escorting Iraqi police to mission sites.

Other 2/197 soldiers have contributed to capturing insurgents and their weapons caches through the station's Criminal Investigations Division.

As the weather drops into the 30's here soldiers of the 2/197 MP CO are awaiting news about our redeployment to home.

The 2/197 MP CO in Ba'qubah proudly welcomed back **Staff Sgt. Donald Smialek of Campton** from his recovery in the United States at Ft. Dix, NJ. **Smialek** wanted to rejoin the unit and continue to lead his squad for the remainder of this deployment. He sustained shrapnel wounds on June 24 and was sent home to Walter Reed Army Hospital and then Ft. Dix to recover. He is doing well and leads his squad bravely.

Recent promotions include **Spc. Keith Hatch of Pike, Spc. Aaron Marshall of Ashland, Sgt. John Evans of Rindge, Sgt. Jonathan Foote of Warren and Sgt. Robert McKay of Gilmanton.**

\*3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon update submitted by **Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Robert Haynes of Berlin**: Well since the attacks on the police stations in Mosul Iraq, the MP (Bladerunner) platoon has been busy attempting to assess the damage on the East side of the river. Our platoon is working in conjunction with the Stryker (Infantry Battalion) to attempt to capture those responsible for the destruction. Some of my soldiers were involved in several raids designed to catch key leaders, and disrupt their ability to move in the city. We now are working hand in hand with the local police to re-supply them and help them set up the defense of their stations. Back in the beginning of the month one of my squads (lead by **Staff Sgt. Benjamin Elliott of North Haverhill, MA**) were attacked by a squad size element of insurgents. They returned fire and chased them down, eliminating the insurgent cell and capturing a cache of RPG's, 60mm mortars, and other weapon systems. With the holiday season approaching, so do all the packages with great stuff from home. My platoon would like to thank all of you who have sent us packages and gifts. We really do appreciate it.

\*4<sup>th</sup> Platoon update submitted by **1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Robert Teague of South Berwick, ME**: 4<sup>th</sup> platoon "Black Knight" continues to provide security to the Tikrit Police Academy. To date the TIPS Academy has graduated approximately 2,000 students that are working in the Salah Ad Din province, providing security, patrolling the streets and working with coalition forces to secure the area and rid the Anti-Iraqi Forces. 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon has also augmented 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon in conducting combat patrol escorts and also Customs missions, certifying equipment to load and ship for redeployment.

\*Headquarters platoon update by **Staff Sgt. Ken McMullen of Farmington**: Here it is the end of November and we find ourselves coming into the final months of our deployment with the Big Red One here in Iraq, and we still seem to be picking up the pace in our operational tempo and not allowing complacency a chance to creep in and trip us up. The heat of summer has finally eased to the point we find ourselves digging out our field jackets and poly-pros for use during the evening hours.

Our Maintenance Section has been kept gainfully employed keeping the units vehicles mission capable, which is definitely not an easy task considering the high mileage and battle scars the vehicles have been subjected to this past year. The mechanics have seen to the completion of having all the 2/197<sup>th</sup>'s vehicles up-armored. They've installed a new motor in the

operations M998 (truck) and added more armor plating to the M114's (humvee) turrets to protect the gunners even better.

The Operations Section is also busier than ever as they continue to perform their vital roles in the Provost Marshal's Office and the 24/7 Tactical Operations Center in the Division Headquarters in Tikrit as well as the Diyala Provincial Police Headquarters in Ba'qubah. We had two promotions this month in the Operations Platoon: **Sgt. Mark Norris of Berlin** and **Spc. Adam Haley of North Conway**. Both men have been hard at work for us pulling 12 hour shifts in the Provost Marshal's Office covering the night shift. The 24/7 Tactical Operations Center in Tikrit continues to be a bee hive of activity day and night as they man the radios and phones and other mediums to keep track of all the missions, past, present and future, in addition to performing other duties such as the creation of ID badges for all civilian employees on the forward operating base, as well as picking up the duties of our beloved administrator while he is back in the states enjoying a well deserved R&R.

The Supply Section has been out straight providing the necessary supplies and resources to keep a 169-man company running like a finely tuned watch. Recent supply successes are the procurement and fielding of X26 Tasers for our MP platoons, the purchase of real mattresses for the bunk beds in the living quarters for those that wanted them, the updating of all the platoons hand receipts, and the creation of a draft of the packing list for re-deployment.

The soldiers of "White Mountain Thunder" continue to serve with professionalism, dignity and esprit de corps. We are all looking forward to the successful completion of our mission and the joyous reunion with our families and friends.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 172<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Forward**

***Capt. Eric Fessenden of Windham** is commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 172<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Forward. His unit arrived in Iraq in early March. The unit has been conducting security operations.*

1/172<sup>nd</sup> is now into its tenth month of providing exterior defense and escort security for Camp Bucca in Southern Iraq. The Marauder soldiers are doing well, looking forward to returning to New Hampshire but staying focused on our mission. Despite dangerous missions and occasional enemy activity, we have suffered no casualties to date and remain safe. We continue to spend a great deal of time on the road, escorting convoys destined for anywhere between Northern Kuwait to Baghdad. We also patrol and man the security towers around our camp, which can be difficult during the cold desert nights -- after fighting the incredible heat during the summer, the soldiers are now bundled up against the 35 degree weather and strong, freezing winds. I thought New England weather was crazy, but it doesn't compare to this place!

Realizing the need to build Iraq's ability to provide its own security, we have increased our efforts to train the local Iraqi Police. Our camp has provided the police with construction material to build several checkpoints in our area, and our teams have spent many days mentoring the policemen on conducting traffic checkpoints -- tasks like searching vehicles & personnel, dealing with the local population and presenting a professional appearance. The Iraqis are nowhere near as proficient as our soldiers in these tasks, yet we are encouraged by the gradual improvement we are seeing with their performance.

We are also working very closely with the other coalition forces in our area of operations, specifically the British and Danish military. We routinely conduct joint patrols in our sector and often support each other when hostile activity occurs. We even train together at a local firing

range that we constructed near our base, giving many of our men the opportunity to fire weapons from other coalition armies.

Our soldiers continue to be out on the roads and interacting with the locals, and the guys have developed a positive reputation within the nearby towns. Just last week, a patrol led by **Staff Sgt. Timothy Wooster of Somersworth** witnessed a serious car accident involving a dozen Iraqis. The team quickly responded to the site and **Sgt. Aaron Dodge of Dover** and **Spc. David Flores of South Berwick, ME** provided initial medical assistance until the injured could be evacuated. This type of work has paid off for us on several occasions when the locals have warned us of impending enemy actions and weapons caches.

I would like to thank all the New Hampshire organizations that have overwhelmed us with gifts during the holiday season; it definitely lifts the soldiers' spirits to know that their efforts are appreciated. I especially want to wish the 172<sup>nd</sup> families a safe and happy holiday season. I know how difficult this separation has been, and the holidays make it even harder. Please know that I respect and appreciate your support for us and your contribution to the war effort. We look forward to seeing you all soon!

### **Combat Service Support Team, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade**

*Maj. Ralph Huber of Dover is the commander of the Combat Service Support Team, which arrived in Afghanistan in August 2004 and is providing mentorship to the Afghan National Army in a variety of fields.*

On Nov. 24, our team completed it's redeployment from the Herat area of operations back to Camp Blackhorse near Kabul, Afghanistan. This marks the ends of an exciting first 100 days in country.

If you have been following the news, then you know that Oct. 9 was a historic day here in Afghanistan. Every member of our team was involved in making the elections a success. Our mission was to support the Afghan National Army (ANA) while they provided support and security to the United Nations and other election officials. Our battalion was responsible for security in six districts across the province. We spent about two weeks preparing for it and the effort paid off. We had no serious incidents in our area of operations.

The election support mission was the last in a series of missions that began on Aug. 15 when we deployed as part of a contingency operation. The ANA's mission was to stop two rival warlords who were fighting in Herat province and to secure the Shindand Airfield. At the time, the press was calling it the most important operation that the Afghan National Army had undertaken.

The mission was a complete success. The battalion was directly responsible for eliminating illegal checkpoints on Highway 1 between Shindand and Farrah districts and the capture of 734 mines and fuses. And, after a couple of weeks the first warlord had agreed to leave for Kabul and relinquish power.

On Sept. 11, the focus turned towards the second warlord, Ismhal Kahn, the governor of Herat. On the 11th he was informed by the Central Government that would have to step down as governor. Needless to say this did not go over very well. On the 12th several demonstrations in Herat turned violent. Several UN buildings were set ablaze, cars over turned, essentially a full scale riot to include hostile fire from small arms, grenades, RPGs, and Molotov cocktails.

The battalion was sent in to relieve the central police corps which was surrounded. We accomplished that mission securing the center of the city and providing secure evacuation routes for the UN and other Non-Governmental Organizations. It was a big day for the team and everyone did well. End result, the second warlord was out of power and peace was restored to the region.

And, of course, the third major event was the elections which brought a close to our team's first deployment. The next couple of months will be spent training and preparing for our next mission, which is expected to be early next year. Several team members were cited for personal courage during the operation. **Capt. Justin Chumak of Concord** was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge and several other awards are pending.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 172<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery, Rear Area Operations Center**

***Lt. Col. David Mercieri of Barrington** is commander of 1-172<sup>nd</sup> FA, RAOC, which is supporting a command and control mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Editor's note: The RAOC team departed this week from its mobilization station and will be arriving in theater by the end of the month.*

Over the last few weeks the 1-172 FA (RAOC) completed a series of collective training events to include our convoy live fire exercise, Military Operations in an Urban Terrain Site (MOUT) training and a Mission Readiness Exercise (MRX). During the MOUT training event, former Iraqi civilians assist as role players to add to the realism of the exercise. It was amusing to see **Capt. David Fink of Manchester** try to explain to the local Sheik through an interpreter why we were occupying his house and why his people should not walk off with our equipment.

Another highlight includes **Spc. James Russo of Nashua** successfully administering an IV in the field to **Maj. Mark Leahey of Rochester** during our MRX. **Russo** is one of 24 certified Combat Lifesavers on the RAOC Team.

During our convoy live fire event, the team demonstrated its ability to engage targets while traveling at convoy speed.

Having completed our required deployment training, we continue to focus our daily training to include Combat Lifesaver classes where **Sgt. Paul Marcoux of Portsmouth** has been a wealth of knowledge. **Capt. Steve LaValley of Derry** has conducted daily Arabic basic language classes, and **Capt. Charles Hackett of Portsmouth** conducted GPS mounted convoy training. We also continue to refine both our battle drills and our SOPs.

For the most part we are considered validated and await our overseas orders. With the assistance of **Maj. Brian Thorne of Worcester, MA** we have been able to gather beneficial information to assist in our mission preparation.

We continue to remain focused on our mission and our mission preparation. Morale remains high as the team as a whole is anxious to begin our mission.

### **260<sup>th</sup> Air Traffic Control Squadron, 157<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing**

***Lt. Col. Scott Gardner of Lynn Haven, FL** is commander of 12 members of the 260 Air Traffic Control Squadron, which deployed in August to Mosul, Iraq in support of Army air traffic operations. Their responsibilities include the air traffic control tower, radar, maintenance and weather reports for Army fixed wing and helicopter operations.*

We arrived in August and have been extremely busy. We have guardsman from Klamath Falls, OR, Cheyenne, WY and Meridian, MS with us, as well as active duty airmen. We have been busy upgrading the airfield in preparation for turning over portions of the airfield back to the Iraqi's.

**Master Sgt. Darrell Whitney of Dayton, ME** has been busy installing new solar airfield lighting, in addition to keeping the radar running smoothly. **Master Sgt. Phil Erwin of New Durham** has done a terrific job trying to integrate Air Force equipment and philosophy into an Army operation. **Senior Master Sgt. Roger Neisler of Northwood** has had to learn the Army lingo so he and his tower controllers can support the Army combat operations. He's turning purple by the day (purple is a metaphor for Air Force (blue) and Army (green) joint operations.

**Master Sgt. Elizabeth Robinson of Berwick, ME** has taken on the additional duty – more like full-time duty – of the unit first sergeant. The contacts she has made on base have been a great boost for morale – especially the helicopter orientation rides she set up for everybody. **Master Sgt. Roy Blanchard of Dedham, MA** is our translator. Having been former Army, he translates the Army speak into Air Force language we can all understand. **Staff Sgt. Robert Stewart of Dover** was able to get to Tikrit to see his dad. **Senior Airman Ken Kelley of Nashua** is doing a great job as our Safety Officer. He is known as "Safety Ken." **Staff Sgt. Dominick Noyes of Portsmouth** has been able to fix some of the radar problems that have existed since the radar was set up last spring! **Staff Sgt. Ken Gosson of Stoneham, MA** has been keeping our e-mail up and running. And Fidelity, his civilian employer, has been keeping us stocked with all kinds of good stuff. **Senior Airman Matt Leventure of Auburn, Staff Sgt. Brad Clark of Kittery, ME and Senior Airman Jeff Rowan of Derry** were instrumental in our first place Dodge ball finish. The Air Traffic Control/ Weather Flight were the base champs.

We have less than a month to go and we'll be sending our folks home. It's been a great experience that none of us will ever forget. Have a great Holiday Season and we'll see you shortly.

**END**